CHAPTER I: THE TAIWAN STRAITS HEAT UP

Prior to July 1958 the Taiwan Straits had gone through a period of relative quiet since the last Chinese Communist probe against the Offshore Islands in 1954-55.* Periodic artillery fire had been exchanged between the two sides but at very low levels and most of it consisted of shells packed with propaganda rather than high explosives. In addition, the two sides exchanged loud speaker broadcasts across the narrow straits between Quemoy and the mainland, a scant six miles. In July 1958 signs were detected of increased Chinese Communist activity in Fukien Province opposite Taiwan. Awareness of these actions by the Government of the Republic of China (GRC) led to increased activity by the Nationalists. The U. S. Government in turn took steps to meet the increased Chinese Communist activity. By early August some United States and GRC officials concluded that a new crisis was about to break in the Taiwan Straits.

---

*Classified material on the 1954-55 crisis was not examined. For a brief description of the events, see Richard P. Stebbins, *The United States in World Affairs*, Harper and Row for the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, *1954*, pp. 264-66; *1955*, pp. 88-99. See also Tang Tsou, *The Embroilment Over Quemoy: Mao, Chiang and Dulles*, University of Utah, Institute of International Studies, 1959, pp. [illegible]

THE MILITARY BALANCE

Assessments of the military balance in the Taiwan Straits and the Far East and of the strategic balance between the United States and the Soviet Union made by American officials both before and after the crisis suggested that the Chinese Communists had superiority in a clash limited to Chinese Nationalist and Chinese Communist forces only and aimed at an interdiction of or assault against Quemoy or Matsu. United States intervention would certainly assure the defense of Taiwan and would enable the holding of Quemoy against a blockade attempt and against an invasion but, in the view of most American officials, only with the use of nuclear weapons. During the crisis there were qualitative and quantitative improvements in both GRC and American forces in the Taiwan Straits area but these augmentations did not change the basic assessment of relative strength.

Chinese Communist Forces

In August 1958 the Chinese Communists were estimated to have approximately 894,000 men under arms organized into twelve armies. Three of these armies of 46,000 men each were in Fukien Province opposite Taiwan, and 80,000 troops, including one artillery division and two anti-aircraft artillery divisions, were believed to be within fifty miles of the mainland coast three miles across the Straits from Quemoy.[1]

A special national intelligence estimate (SNIE) in August 1958 estimated that Chinese Communist troop movements could take place rapidly and probably without detection. It was estimated that the Chinese Communists would be able to obtain a three to one superiority for an amphibious assault and could be expected to mass approximately 200,000 troops before attempting an attack on Quemoy. Such forces were estimated to be capable of successful assault operation provided the Chinese Communists also had air and naval superiority. It was estimated that by using all of their small landing craft capability, the Chinese Communists could lift three rifle divisions for assault on Taiwan. The Chinese Communist Air Force was estimated to have a good air defense and tactical support capability and a good early-warning system and could prevail over the Chinese Nationalist Air Force in any attempt to capture Taiwan.[2] The estimated size of Chinese Communist air and naval forces as of August 1958 is indicated in Table 1.

For possible use in a blockade effort as well as support of an invasion, the Chinese Communists had approximately 393 artillery pieces in the Quemoy area, including thirty-six 150-mm howitzers. The guns were in place around Amoy Harbor on the mainland, on Amoy, and on two small Chinese Communist controlled islands in an arc of 240 degrees from Quemoy. Most of the gun positions were not covered in any way but there was ample room to move and replace the batteries and each could be fired from several alternative positions. The artillery was reported to be able to hit all of the Quemoy Islands except for a small part of Big Quemoy. Though the Chinese Communists had begun to manufacture many kinds of artillery, it was estimated that production was still relatively low and that therefore most of the pieces in the Quemoy area had been made in the Soviet Union. The ammunition itself was manufactured by the Chinese Communists.[3] The Chinese Navy was believed to have extensive offensive and defensive mining capability, and the SNIE estimated that with some strengthening of the deployment of units currently assigned to the fleet, the Chinese Communists could effectively interdict supply landings to the Offshore Islands.[4]

Chinese Nationalist Forces

The Chinese Nationalist Army in August 1958 consisted of approximately 450,000 men of whom 320,000 were of combat capability. Approximately one-third of these troops were

Table 1

CHINESE COMMUNIST AIR AND NAVAL FORCES

Chinese Communist Navy	
Destroyers	4
Submarines	16
Escort Vessels	4
Patrol Boats	249
Mine Sweepers	31
Landing Craft	53
Other Surface Crafts	300
Total	657

Chinese Communist Air Force	
Jet Fighters	1785
Piston Fighters	275
Jet Light Bombers	450
Piston Tactical Attack Aircraft	505
Land-based ASW Planes	20
Piston Medium Bombers	20
Piston Transports	260
Other Jets	225
Other Piston Airplanes	810
Total	4350

SOURCE: Central Intelligence Agency Memorandum, Memorandum to the Intelligence Advisory Committee, Subject: Special National Intelligence Estimate 100-9-58 ("Probable Developments in the Taiwan Straits Area") transmitting proposed Annex, "Chinese Communist and Chinese Nationalists Military Strengths and Capabilities in the Taiwan Straits Area," August 22, 1958 (Secret). Later issued as part of Annex A to SNIE 100-9-58.

on the Offshore Islands, with 86,000 troops on Quemoy and 23,000 in the Matsu group. The break down of forces on the Quemoy Islands is indicated in Table 2. The troops on the Offshore Islands were believed to be equipped with approximately thirty days of supplies and forty days of ammunition. The Chinese Nationalists had 308 artillery pieces in place on Quemoy, though only 56 of these were considered capable of effective counter battery fire.[5]

The Chinese Nationalist Navy was estimated to be primarily defensive but capable of lifting one division to the Offshore Islands in order to bolster their defense. It was believed unable to oppose successfully the Chinese Communist PT boat and submarine force, which could operate in the Taiwan Straits area. There was reported to be virtually a complete lack of coordination between the Navy and the Chinese Nationalist Air Force which, as indicated, was believed to be significantly inferior to the Chinese Communist Air Forces. The air force was reported to have a photo-reconnaissance capability within 750 miles of Taiwan and a limited night reconnaissance capability of up to 1000 miles. Reconnaissance missions were regularly flown over the mainland. Virtually all of the Chinese Nationalist military equipment was of American origin and had been

Table 2

CHINESE NATIONALIST FORCE DEPLOYMENT ON QUEMOY ISLANDS

(August 1958)

Island	Forces
Big Quemoy	74,100
Little Quemoy	10,450
Ta-tan	1,300
Erh-tan	250

SOURCE: Central Intelligence Agency Memorandum, Memorandum to the Intelligence Advisory Committee, Subject: Special National Intelligence Estimate 100-9-58 ("Probable Developments in the Taiwan Straits Area"), Annex A, "Chinese Communist and Chinese Nationalists Military Strengths and Capabilities in the Taiwan Straits Area," August 22, 1958 (Secret).

supplied under the American Military Assistance Program. The strength of the Chinese Nationalist Navy and Air Force is indicated in Table 3.

Although the Chinese Communists were later to claim that the cause of the crisis was the build-up of Chinese Nationalist troops on Quemoy, there is nothing to suggest that this was in fact a very likely or very important part of the Chinese Communist motivation. Although a significant movement of troops prior to the crisis did take place between July 2 and July 13, 1958, when the 58th Chinese Nationalist Division replaced the 32nd Division on Quemoy,[6] the only major increase in forces on Quemoy had occurred in October 1956 when the garrison was increased from 79,000 to 85,000 men. Very little military activity of consequence appears to have been carried out from the Offshore Islands. There had been a few attempts at penetration from the Islands but none had been successful. No overflights were staged from the Islands and the blockade of Amoy Harbor had been lifted by the Chinese Nationalists in July of 1957. Artillery fire from the Island was at a very low level and consisted mainly of propaganda shells augmented by the use of loudspeakers.[7] The range of activity is indicated in Table 4, and the pattern of artillery fire in

Table 3

CHINESE NATIONALIST AIR AND NAVAL FORCES

Chinese Nationalist Navy	
Destroyers	4
Escorts	5
Patrol Escorts	7
Mine Sweepers	9
Miscellaneous	110
Chinese Nationalist Air Force	
Jet Fighters	450
Jet Bombers	1
Piston Tactical Attack Planes	9
Land-based ASW Planes	10
Piston Transports	143
Other Jets	46
Other Piston Planes	167
Total Planes	826

SOURCE: Central Intelligence Agency Memorandum, Memorandum to the Intelligence Advisory Committee, Subject: Special National Intelligence Estimate 100-9-58 ("Probable Developments in the Taiwan Straits Area"), Annex A, "Chinese Communist and Chinese Nationalists Military Strengths and Capabilities in the Taiwan Straits Area," August 22, 1958 (Secret).

Table 4

CHINESE NATIONALIST ACTIVITY FROM THE OFFSHORE ISLANDS

Prior to August 1958

Activity	Comments
Commando-type raids	During the preceding year the GRC probed the nearby mainland from both Quemoy and Matsu with small scout raiding operations of extremely shallow penetration. The largest raid, which took place on October 2, 1957, involved a party of 28 men which withdrew almost immediately after drawing machine-gun fire. The GRC forces demonstrated an ability to land larger numbers of men on the mainland by holding training exercises under Chinese Communist observation and using clearly interceptable communications.
Infiltration	The Islands of Matsu were used extensively by several GRC intelligence groups to infiltrate agents to the mainland. In July 1958, for example, the Ministry of National Defense (MND) put 150 agents in from Matsu. Quemoy was used much less extensively for this purpose. Generally, the infiltration was not successful, the agents either immediately surrendering or being captured.
Overflights	No overflights were ever staged from the Offshore Islands. The small planes which landed at the single Quemoy airfield did sometimes fly in close for observation but never penetrated over

Table 4 -- continued

	the mainland. There is no airfield on the Matsu Islands.
Loud speaker propaganda	The GRC operated four loudspeaker stations on Quemoy and one on Matsu. Wind prevented their use one-half of the year and limited their effectiveness for the rest of the year. Average broadcasts of three or four hours were carried one or two days every week and consisted half of music and half of propaganda. The propaganda was aimed at countering the Chinese Communist propaganda directed at the Offshore Islands. It often appeared to be operating simply to keep the troops on Quemoy from hearing the Chinese Communist propaganda.
Port blockade	GRC artillery on Quemoy could interfere with foreign shipping entering the Amoy harbor but had not done so since July 1957. Any Chinese Communist merchant ships passing within range were fired upon. The guns on Matsu did not command the entrance to any important port.
Artillery fire	There was relatively less fire by the GRC in the year preceding August 1958 than in previous periods. The GRC did not fire at all from the Offshore Islands in August. During 1958, prior to the crisis, the GRC had fired 3,174 rounds from Quemoy. Two thousand of these were fired at the Ta-teng causeway and the rest were fired against the

Table 4 -- continued

	mainland. Two-thirds of the shells were propaganda rather than explosives (HE). (Table 5 shows the pattern of fire during the first six months of 1956-58.)
Mining operations	There was no mining around Quemoy or Matsu. The GRC had plans to lay defensive mines to the west and north of Quemoy, but this would have required United States concurrence because the Navy Military Advisory Assistance Group (MAAG) held the necessary explosive mechanisms.

SOURCE: State Department Telegram from Taipei, No. 357, September 10, 1958 (Secret).

Table 5

ARTILLERY EXCHANGES BETWEEN THE OFFSHORE ISLANDS AND THE MAINLAND

st 6 Mos. f Year	Total No. Artillery Exchanges	Exchanges Totaling more than 100 Rounds	Nationalist Initiated Exchanges	Communist Initiated Exchanges	Days on which only Nationalists Fired	Days on which only Communists Fired
1956	266	51	240	26	71	6
1957	288	33	262	28	52	4
1958	255	7	250	5	54	2

OURCE: Appendix to Enclosure B to Report by Joint Strategic Survey Council to JCS on egotiations with Communist China (U), JCS 2118/118, September 18, 1958 (Confidential).

American Pacific Military Forces

As indicated above, in a Chinese Communist-Chinese Nationalist clash, the Chinese Communists were considered to have the capability both of establishing air and naval superiority in the Taiwan Straits and of capturing the Offshore Islands, provided they were willing to accept the large casualties that would be involved. The unknown, as far as the Chinese Communists and the Chinese Nationalists as well as the American military forces in the area were concerned, was what role American military forces would in fact be prepared to play. It was clear that if the total American military power in the area, including its atomic capability, were thrown into the balance, Quemoy could be held, but the consensus appeared to be that the United States simply did not have the conventional capability to hold Quemoy against a determined Chinese Communist attack.

On August 23 there were 144 atomic capable aircraft and missiles in positions which could support Taiwan. Sixteen of these were Naval aircraft aboard the U.S.S. Hancock. The Air Force capability was as follows: F100's, 87; B57's, 16; PM61's, 20; B47's, 5; for a total of 128. The Johnson Island B57 Squadron was on alert.[8]

United States conventional capability in the areas was as follows: The Pacific Air Force had the following units capable of non nuclear operations: 1 F-100 Squadron at Clark Air Force Base, 2 F-100 Squadrons at Kadena, 1 F-100 Squadron at Chia-ti and 1 B57 Squadron at Naha. These units were reported to have POL, spare parts and high explosive (HE) weapons which could be employed while still maintaining a substantial part of their general war capability. In addition, the Pacific Fleet was reported to have four aircraft carriers with sufficient ammunition for 80,000 rounds per day for sixty days. The Chinese Nationalists operating in conjunction with American forces were reported to be capable of 650 sorties per day, delivering 1,300 bombs for only fifteen days.[9]

At the time of the outbreak of the crisis, the Taiwan Defense Command (TDC) had authorization from the Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC) to plan with the GRC to defend Taiwan and the Penghus, including planning for United States participation in the defense of Quemoy and Matsu if and when this might be ordered by higher U. S. authority.

The Strategic Balance

In the summer of 1958 American strategic nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union was very great, possibly as great as it would ever be in the postwar period. This superiority was apparently recognized by top American

summer of 1958. Their bomber capability is shown in Table 7.

CHINESE COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES

The first sign of possible renewed Chinese Communist activity in the Taiwan Straits came on June 30 when the Chinese Communists issued a statement on the Sino-American ambassadorial talks. This statement noted that the talks had been in recess since December 1957 when the United States had proposed reducing them to the level below that of the ambassadorial rank at which they had previously been held.[12] After reviewing the events leading up to the adjournment of the talks, the statement concluded:

> The Chinese Government hereby declares once again that it can neither agree to the unilateral changing of the level of the Sino-American ambassadorial talks, nor can it agree to the continued suspension of the talks on any administrative pretext. The Chinese Government demands that the United States Government designate a representative of ambassadorial rank and resume the talks within fifteen days counting from today; otherwise, the Chinese Government cannot but consider that the United States has decided to break off the Sino-American ambassadorial talks.[13]

It is not clear whether the Chinese Communist leadership, when it issued this statement on June 30, had already decided to launch a heavy artillery barrage against Quemoy,

Table 6

AMERICAN STRATEGIC NUCLEAR FORCES

Summer 1958

Ready Strategic Bombers	
B-36	45
B-52	294
B-47	1,052
Total	1,391
Ready Tactical Bombers	
B-57	78
B-66	44
Total	122
Ready Air Refueling Capability	
KC-97	646
KC-135	106
Total	752

SOURCE: U. S. Air Force, Statistical Digest Fiscal Year 1959 (14th edition), prepared by Directorate of Statistical Services, Comptroller of the Air Force.

Table 7

SOVIET BOMBER CAPABILITY

Summer 1958

Bulls (piston engine B-29 copy)	445	
Badgers (medium range)	920	
Bears (intercontinental turboprop)	68	153
Bison (intercontinental jets)	85	
Total	1,518	

SOURCE: AFCIN estimates.

as they did on August 23. The Chinese had probably decided to activate the airfields opposite Taiwan, and they might have felt that the resumption of the Sino-American talks would make it less likely that the United States would sanction GRC bombing of the bases. Peking was concerned, however, by the increasing tendency towards a tacit adoption of a two-China policy by the American Government and by other nations.

During the first weeks of July there was no perceptible increase in military activity. Chinese Communist artillery fire against the Offshore Islands continued at the normal level: For example, in the period July 9 to July 16 the Chinese fired 91 propaganda rounds and 108 high explosive rounds against the Offshore Islands.[14]

On July 14 the Iraqi coup took place with a suddenness that certainly surprised the Chinese Communist leadership as much as it did the West. On July 17 the *People's Daily* announced recognition by the People's Republic of China of the new Iraqi regime.* The *People's Daily* of the

---

*I am greatly indebted to Professor Tang Tsou of the University of Chicago for the references to Chinese language materials drawn from his own research on Communist China and the Offshore Islands. I have also benefitted greatly from several conversations with Professor Tsou about Chinese Communist strategy during the 1958 crisis.

17th also announced the opening of a "Get Out of the Middle East" campaign and the beginning of a series of rallies on this behalf.[15] On the following day, the People's Daily began to link the "Get Out of the Middle East" campaign with a "Liberate Taiwan" campaign. However, the "Get Out of the Middle East" theme continued to get major attention. On July 17 a rally was held in Peking protesting U. S. intervention in Lebanon. The major address was given by Peng Chen, a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and Mayor of Peking. In this speech Peng declared:

> [The Chinese People] have proved to the whole world that the U. S. imperialists...are not be be feared. They are only a "paper tiger," outwardly strong but internally weak. It is entirely possible to defeat their aggression and provocation.
>
> In our war of liberation the U. S. also dispatched many troops to China to carry out armed threats. But confronted with the united and powerful Chinese people who persisted in fighting, the U. S. forces ended up by sneaking out of the Chinese mainland....At present the U. S. imperialists still occupy by force our territory of Taiwan. We Chinese people are determined to liberate Taiwan and have full confidence that we will achieve this. The U. S. forces must get out of the territory of Taiwan! We firmly believe that the people with justice on their side will triumph in the end with the east wind prevailing over the west wind, the imperialists

> are all the more definitely doomed
> to failure.[16]

There was no mention in this period in the Chinese Communist press of the effort which Chinese Communist leadership was then making to get the Soviet Union to send troops to the Middle East.[17]

On July 25 the People's Daily provided its readers with the first hint of an impending crisis by reporting that President of the Republic of China Chiang Kai-shek on July 17 had cancelled all military leaves on Taiwan.* The article also reported that American planes had intruded over the mainland and dropped propaganda leaflets and that there were a number of military meetings going on in Taiwan.[19]

On July 26 the People's Daily announced that a major military conference had been held in China between May 27 and July 22 with more than one thousand senior officials in attendance. It reported that Chairman of the People's Republic of China Mao Tse-tung and other leaders had spoken. The article gave no indication as to what had been considered. It is still not known what was discussed at this meeting. If a military movement against the Offshore Islands was discussed, it would suggest that the move that did come had in fact been planned prior to the Iraqi coup and was thus not triggered by it. On the other hand, there are at least two other subjects that might have been and were almost certainly discussed at this meeting, possibly to the exclusion of any discussion of the impending Offshore Island operation. August was to see the announcement by the Chinese Communist Government of the campaign to put every Chinese into the militia, and it is likely that this was discussed in great detail at the meeting.[20] In addition, ever since the launching of the Soviet Sputnik and the announcement by the Soviets of an ability to develop an intercontinental missile capability in late 1957 the Chinese had been arguing that the East Wind prevailed over the West Wind and hence it should be possible to take more vigorous action, including military action, to expand Communist influence throughout the world.[21] It is almost certain that the implications of these two subjects for the future orientation of the Chinese Communist Army were discussed. It seems difficult to believe that in this context there would be no consideration of the possibility of a move against the Offshore Islands. Most likely it was at this conference that the decision was ratified to take advantage of the changing balance of world forces by making some kind of move toward the liquidation of the Chiang Kai-shek regime.

---

*Leaves were in fact cancelled on Taiwan.[18]

On July 26 the Chinese Communists concluded a follow-up to the larger military conference with a meeting of representatives of the East Sea Fleet. The meeting honored a naval officer who had sunk a Chinese Nationalist destroyer in 1954, and various suggestions were made as to how to liberate Taiwan.[22]

On July 29 the first military engagement of the crisis took place in the form of an air battle over the Taiwan Straits. Four GRC F-84 jets on a routine patrol mission in the vicinity of the Chinese Communist port of Swatow were attacked by four Chinese Communist MIG-17's. Two of the F-84's, which were on a photo-reconnaissance mission, were shot down by the Chinese Communist planes.[23]

The Khrushchev Visit to Peking

On July 31 Soviet Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev arrived unannounced in Peking. There was no mention of Khrushchev's visit to Peking in the Chinese Communist press until a communiqué was issued on August 3 at the conclusion of his visit.

By the time Khrushchev arrived on the 31st, the "Get Out of the Middle East" campaign had reached the provinces far beyond Peking, indicating that it was nearing its end. On the day of Khrushchev's arrival, a major speech was made by the Mayor of Peking and reported prominently in the People's Daily. The speech included both the Middle East and the Liberation of Taiwan themes.[24] On August 1, the rallies honoring the People's Liberation Army (PLA) anniversary put the "Liberation of Taiwan" theme ahead of the Middle East campaign, and rallies of this kind were held throughout the country including Manchuria and Shanghai.[25] On August 4, the People's Daily published the communiqué of the Khrushchev-Mao talks. The communiqué was notable mainly for its failure to mention Taiwan and for its lack of substantive content. On the same day the People's Daily reported that rallies were being held throughout the country supporting the communiqué.[26]

How?

There is still no reliable information as to what took place at meetings between Khrushchev and Mao Tse-tung. Speculation at the time centered on the possibility that the meeting had been called at the urging of the Chinese Communists in face of the proposal by Khrushchev that the Security Council meet to discuss the Middle East crisis. However, the crisis in the Middle East had abated by then and it seems unlikely that the meeting was largely devoted to this question. Insofar as the Middle East situation was raised, Mao might well have accused Khrushchev of not taking a strong enough stand against the United States. Mao undoubtedly argued that with the changing balance of forces in the world, the Sino-Soviet bloc should take more vigorous stands in thwarting imperialism in various areas of the world.

It must have been clear to Khrushchev by that time, even if he had not been informed by the Chinese Communists, that they were planning some kind of military operations vis-à-vis the Chinese Nationalist regime. It seems likely, particularly because the defense ministers of both countries were present, that the impending Chinese Communist move was discussed by Mao and Khrushchev at their meeting. Whether or not Khrushchev and Mao agreed on the desirability of a Chinese probe against the Offshore Islands remains a matter of speculation and controversy.* Mao probably explained to Khrushchev, perhaps in some detail, the proposed Chinese Communist strategy in relation to the Offshore Islands and requested the kind of Soviet support which he felt would improve the chances of success for the Chinese military move. In view of Khrushchev's unwillingness to take any action in the Middle East while at the same time he was agreeing that there had been at least some change in the international balance of power it is extremely unlikely that he would have vigorously opposed the Chinese plan to probe the American position in the Taiwan Straits. Khrushchev may well have cautioned that the Soviet Union was not in a position to support any offensive operations by the Chinese Communists, but it is also doubtful whether Mao would have requested such aid. The major issue discussed between the two Communist leaders would appear to be the timing and nature of a statement by Khrushchev or the Soviet Government in support of the Chinese Communists and aimed at deterring an American attack on China. Whether Mao asked for but did not receive a promise by Khrushchev to issue that statement prior to or during the opening days of the Chinese probe is not clear, but it does seem likely that there were at least tentative arrangements for the statement in the form of a letter to Eisenhower which Khrushchev did issue on September 7.

---

*The more general issue of the extent of Sino-Soviet cooperation and disagreement during the Quemoy Crisis is discussed below.

In the period prior to August 23 the Soviets made only a few references to the Taiwan Straits. On August 7 the Soviet newspaper *Sovetsky Flot* reported that the United

States and the Chinese Nationalists on Taiwan were planning to invade the Chinese mainland and that American forces in the Pacific were being alerted for the operation.

A week later, in a move the meaning and intention of which is still not clear, American Ambassador to Moscow Llewellyn Thompson was told by a Soviet official that the United States and the Soviet Union must tackle and resolve the Taiwan problem sooner or later because the present situation could not go on indefinitely. The Soviets, he was told, understood American policy and thought there was a real chance of working out a solution. Thompson's comment on the exchange was that in view of Khrushchev's recent visit to Peking this probably represented more than a casual remark, though he was not able to indicate what its significance might be.[27] At the same time, there were reports circulated in East Europe, apparently inspired by the Chinese, that the Soviets had promised to give nuclear weapons to the Chinese.[28]

On August 19, the Soviets gave the Chinese their first and apparently only indication of public support prior to August 23. In a Soviet commentary, broadcast only in Mandarin, the Chinese were assured that they were not isolated because the "USSR and the socialist countries stand side by side with People's China." The broadcast warned Washington against undertaking risks.[29]

Chinese Communist military and political activity continued at a high level following the Khrushchev-Mao meeting. On August 2 the Chinese Communist occupation of an airfield opposite Taiwan was confirmed, when aerial photographs thirty-six MIG aircraft on an airfield in Swatow. Confirmation of Chinese occupation of a second field came on August 5, of a third on August 13 and a fourth on August 18.[30] By August 22 there were reported to be 173 aircraft on these fields.[31] The first overflights of the Offshore Islands since 1955 were reported in the first week of August.

On August 7 a second air battle took place when a Chinese Nationalist air—reconnaissance mission encountered Communist MIGs from the newly activated airfields. The encounter was reported by both the Chinese Communists and the Nationalists. The Communists claimed that the battle took place over Fukien Province and the Nationalists reported that it took place over the Taiwan Straits. The precise location of the planes during their encounter is impossible to determine. This was a Chinese Nationalist reconnaissance operation over the mainland, which was intercepted by the

Chinese Communists with planes from their newly activated airfields. The GRC reported that there were no losses on either side, but the Chinese Communists claimed that one GRC plane had been downed. The GRC Defense Ministry announced that there were now Chinese Communist MIG-17's at four airfields opposite Taiwan and warned the people of Taiwan to prepare for Chinese Communist air strikes.[32] During the following week a number of air battles took place both over the Taiwan Straits and over the mainland area directly opposite Taiwan. The last air battle prior to the outbreak of heavy artillery firing occurred on August 14, when in a major air engagement near Foochow, two Communist jets and one GRC jet fighter were destroyed.[33] The last shelling of Quemoy prior to the period of heavy firing took place on August 18, when approximately 100 rounds were fired.[34]

On August 9, 12, and August 18 the Chinese Communists also engaged in overflights of Quemoy.[35] On the 8th, 4 MIG's circled over Matsu[36] and on the 16th there was a Chinese Communist overflight of Matsu by thirty-four aircraft.[37]

On August 13 the People's Daily reported that a demonstration had been held in Amoy against the United States and Chiang Kai-shek because they were creating a tense situation in the Taiwan Straits by their military build-up. The major theme of the demonstration was the "Support the Liberation of Taiwan" campaign, although mention was still made of the Middle East situation.

In the week preceding the outbreak of intensive artillery fire there were no reported air engagements between the Nationalists and the Communists, or any shelling of the Offshore Islands or overflights of Quemoy and Matsu by the Chinese Communists. It was reported later in the People's Daily that during the period August 17 through August 30 (which included the first week of the shelling) an enlarged conference of the Chinese Communist Politburo was being held which discussed the formation of the communes and to a lesser extent the creation of the militia.[38]

The absence of military activity in the week preceding August 23 was matched by a reduction, if not elimination, of discussion of the liberation of Taiwan in the main Chinese Communist news media. It was mainly in broadcasts to foreign countries that the "Liberate Taiwan" theme was pursued. Thus, for example, in a broadcast in Spanish from Peking on August 19, it was reported that the people of China were determined "to expel the Yankee invaders from Taiwan, and to unify all Chinese territory. They have enough strength to do it." The Liberation Army Daily of August 21 in commenting on the arrival of an American warship in Singapore noted that this act was "closely related to the recent U. S. moves to create tension in the Taiwan area." The article declared that the United States had recently moved new weapons into Taiwan and stressed that "the Chinese People's Liberation Army has the great and glorious task of liberating Taiwan, defending China, and safeguarding world peace."

There was thus a week of relative calm before the crisis was to break out into active military action against the Quemoy Islands. This was also a period in which, as we shall see, the Chinese Nationalists, American officials in the field, and at least the lower levels of policymaking in Washington were becoming more and more convinced that a renewed campaign against the Offshore Islands was about to take place.

THE CHINESE NATIONALISTS ANTICIPATE A CRISIS

Ever since they had used Quemoy as a staging base for their retreat to Taiwan and had beaten back a Chinese Communist attempt to capture Quemoy in 1949, the islands of Quemoy and Matsu had become more and more important to the Chinese Nationalists as a symbol of their determination to return to the mainland. In 1954 when the Chinese Nationalists, under U. S. pressure, agreed to abandon the Tachens, they heavily refortified the islands of Quemoy and Matsu and apparently were convinced that the United States Government had committed itself to the defense of the Offshore Islands now under the control of the Chinese Nationalists.

As a result of increased Chinese Communist military activity opposite Taiwan during July (discussed above), the Chinese Nationalists began to fear a possible military move in the Taiwan Straits.* On July 17 Nationalist Premier Chen Cheng told a group of GRC legislators that the Nationalists were prepared to meet any contingency in Taiwan which might stem from the Middle East crisis. He stated that there was a real possibility of a military move by the Chinese Communists.[41] On July 30, GRC officials expressed their concern to American Embassy and military officials that a crisis was developing in the Straits.[42]

On August 3, a GRC Defense Ministry spokesman publicly stated that the Soviet Union would force the Chinese Communists to start a war in Taiwan while attention continued to be focused on the Middle East. He said that the most likely form of military action was an invasion of Matsu and Quemoy.[43]

---

*During July and August the GRC continued to fly its routine reconnaissance missions over the coastal areas of mainland China opposite Taiwan. For example, in the period [illegible] July 16 to 22, ten such missions were flown with no

GRC President Chiang Kai-shek on August 4 called in American Ambassador to the Republic of China Everett F. Drumright and Admiral Roland N. Smoot, who was head of the recently created Taiwan Defense Command (TDC), for the first of what was to become a series of meetings concerning the crisis in the Taiwan Straits. At this meeting Chiang stated that the Khrushchev-Mao talks, which had just been concluded, were the most important event in the Far East in the past ten years, and he predicted that the Chinese Communists might now take military action against Taiwan. He told the American representatives that the Chinese Communists were transferring large contingents of their Air Force to South China and stressed that their military action would probably not be limited to the Offshore Islands. Chiang's interpretation was that the Soviet Union was trying to get the Chinese Communists to make a diversionary move and that the Chinese would be ready to make one. He

---

military activity reported.[39] The GRC averaged 235 overflights per month for visual and photo-reconnaissance as well as air defense. Some of the flights penetrated as far as 2300 miles.[40]

?

asserted that the Chinese might use nuclear weapons and missiles in a surprise attack on Taiwan since they feared the existence of Taiwan more than U. S. retaliation.

Chiang assured Drumright and Smoot that the GRC would observe its treaty agreements with the United States which put certain restraints on its action. Under the arrangements which had developed, the GRC was committed to obtain U. S. approval for major alterations in the tempo or pattern of its operations against the mainland or for various "offensive" actions, including bombing the mainland. In early 1958 the TDC had passed to the GRC a statement codifying the existing agreements which are summarized in Table 8.[44] Chiang asked what the United States would do if the Communists hit Taiwan with nuclear-armed missiles, and indicated that he felt that the GRC should now be told of the likely American response. He also requested that Sidewinder missiles be sent immediately for use by the Chinese Nationalist Air Force, and that delivery of F-86's be expedited. He proposed that one group of American F-100's be stationed on Taiwan and that a show of force be made by the Seventh Fleet.[45]

Beginning the next day GRC officials sought to get American Government of issue a public statement that

W

Table 8

U.S.-GRC DEFENSE ARRANGEMENTS

a. U. S. recognizes GRC's inherent right of self defense.

b. U. S. will make no commitment to counter the Chinese Communist Military operations resulting from GRC offensives undertaken without U. S. concurrence.

c. It is important to establish the onus for military action in the Offshore Island area on the Chinese Communists.

d. Offensive actions against Communist China which radically alter the pattern or tempo of current operations are to be avoided.

e. The following types of operations require no U. S. endorsement:

   1. Ground, naval or air action in defense of GRC territory, not including attacks against the mainland.
   2. Attacks against Communist Chinese targets in vicinity of Quemoy and Matsu provided they are prompt and clear retaliation against Chinese

Table 8 -- continued

Communist attack and against significant military targets.

3. Small-scale intelligence raids and naval cover for withdrawal.
4. Air-to-air action consistent with other operations.
5. Naval and air action against military shipping constituting an immediate threat to GRC territory.
6. Counter battery action against Chinese Communist units which fire on GRC positions.
7. Naval reconnaissance and patrol.
8. Air reconnaissance operations.

f. The following actions require U. S. endorsements:

1. Combat raids against the mainland.
2. Reconnaissance operations larger than company size.
3. Sea mining.
4. Raids on mainland harbors.

W

C

Table 8 -- continued

5. Naval gunfire against the mainland except as noted above.
6. Air attacks against any targets on the mainland or ships alongside mainland wharves.

SOURCE: Memorandum from Commander in Chief Pacific (Signed Felix B. Stump), To: COMTAIWANDEFCON (U. S.), Subject: "Responsibility for planning, combat training, and policy advice to the government of the Republic of China," CINCPAC 5, SER. 000111, January 10, 1958, attached to Memorandum From: Chief of Naval Operations, To: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, Subject: "Chinese Nationalist Military Operations requiring and those not requiring U. S. endorsement (C)," SER. 0002222 T61, August 23, 1958 [a note was attached to the document indicating that the CINCPAC letter from Stump to the TDC constituted a consolidation of directors previously issued to the TDC] (Top Secret).

C

C

it would defend Quemoy. This effort was continued up to and beyond the outbreak of the crisis and led to the Dulles-Morgan exchange of letters* and later to the Dulles Newport statement.** Suspecting that they might be turned down on their request, the Nationalists made their first move unofficially and through military channels. The Chinese Nationalist Defense Minister, Yu Ta-wei, approached Admiral Smoot on August 5 to request that U. S. President Dwight Eisenhower issue a public statement that an attack on Quemoy or Matsu was a threat to Taiwan. Smoot informed Yu that as a political matter the request should go through the American Ambassador, who had not yet been approached. On August 7, apparently after taking Smoot's comments and other informal soundings to mean that the United States was not prepared to issue such a statement, the GRC Foreign Minister, George K. C. Yeh, formally approached Ambassador Drumright and told him that an American statement generally worded to the effect that "a Communist attack on the Offshore Islands would be disturbing to the peace of Asia" would be in order and would be highly useful.[46]

---

*See below, pp.

**See below, pp. 229-236.

On August 6 the GRC proclaimed a state of emergency on Taiwan, the Pescadores, and the Offshore Islands. Leave in the Civil Air Defense and police units in Taiwan had been cancelled. Non-combat visitors were ordered evacuated from the Offshore Islands and an air-raid alert was held on Matsu.[47] On the next day the GRC doubled combat air patrols and put its entire Navy on two-hour notice.[48]

On August 12 a Central Intelligence Agency report, based on information from officials on Quemoy as well as Taiwan, indicated that the GRC expected a squeeze on the Offshore Islands and had made a strong private bid for a public U. S. declaration of support. GRC officials were reported to believe that the United States would be drawn into the defense of the Islands in the end and that a public declaration was most likely to prevent an attack.[49] Another effort to obtain a U. S. statement of support was made on the following day when the GRC Minister of National Defense told Admiral Smoot that he expected the Chinese Communists to continue their actions following the activation of the airfields in the following phases: (1) winning air control, (2) bombing GRC supply vessels, (3) assault on the weakest Offshore Islands, and (4) an attack on all the Offshore Islands. Yu concluded his analysis by asking for a public statement that the United States would defend the Islands. His request was reported by Smoot to Drumright, who reported the incident to Washington.[50]

On August 14 Minister of Defense Yu stated publicly that the GRC would not be provocative and would exercise restraint but was determined to "fight like hell" if it were attacked.[51] On the same day, a New York Times report from Taiwan indicated that the GRC Ministry of Defense was determined to continue its reconnaissance flights over the mainland and that it expected an attack since the present tactics were similar to those used in January 1955 when the GRC evacuated the Tachens Islands.[52]

On the 15th, in a continuation of their efforts to sound out the United States on its attitude towards an attack on the Offshore Islands, the GRC Minister of National Defense, in a letter to Admiral Smoot, formally requested U. S. advance concurrence for GRC bombing of coastal airfields if the Chinese Communists bombed the Offshore Islands. The permission was refused.[53] On August 19 reports were released in Taipei by the Nationalists that U. S. and GRC officials were having informal discussions on a declaration to defend the Offshore Islands.[54]

While carrying on their campaign to get the United States to make a show of strength in the area and to make a public statement that it would defend the Offshore Islands, the Chinese Nationalists continued to make their own military preparations for the oncoming crisis. By the 17th of August they had completed the evacuation of dependents from Quemoy.[55] Prior to the 19th GRC intelligence officials had become convinced that an attack on one of the smaller Offshore Islands would be made within four to six weeks. If successful, it was believed this would be continued until all the Islands were seized.[56] On the 20th, in an effort to boost morale, Chiang Kai-shek visited Quemoy by destroyer.[57]

GRC Army Intelligence gave Chiang his last briefing prior to the outbreak of artillery fire on August 22. It was thought that the Chinese Communists were most likely to attack Matsu for the following reasons: (a) the Chinese Communists had numerical superiority in the Matsu area but not in the Quemoy area; (b) the Chinese Communists had a slightly better air capability over Matsu; (c) the Chinese Communists would have to bring naval units south from Shanghai to support an assault. There was less risk in going into Matsu than in trying to circumvent Matsu and going on to Quemoy. The waters near Matsu were deep enough for the use of these boats.

The briefing indicated that the situation could change if the Chinese Communists moved troops south opposite Quemoy, which they had not yet done, but noted that air superiority in the end would be decisive. The briefers also noted that if the Chinese Communists did not attack Matsu, they might take either Ehr-tan or Ta-tan, in the Quemoy group, which could be successfully attacked at any time and which once captured would be almost impossible to retake.[58]

The Chinese Nationalists were thus maneuvering into position where they were ready, and in fact apparently eager, for the Chinese Communists to begin military activity against the Offshore Islands. They had made an effort so far unsuccessful, to get the United States to commit itself to defending the Offshore Islands or to get permission to bomb the mainland if the Offshore Islands were attacked.

On the other hand, the Nationalists had accommodated with what an American intelligence source on Taiwan described as "surprising grace" to the loss of their ability to penetrate the mainland air. Except for reconnaissance flights along the coast, the GRC was at the time of the outbreak of the crisis flying defensively only. Chinese Communist aircraft were regularly overflying the Offshore Islands, buzzing Matsu once, but had not engaged in strafing or bombing. An American intelligence observer on Taiwan reported that the GRC was showing discipline and restraint.[59]

U. S. REACTION TO THE IMPENDING CRISIS

While the United States was to refuse until the eve of the crisis to issue a public statement implying that it would defend Quemoy, it began in early August to take a number of steps both at the request of the Chinese Nationalists and on its own initiative to bolster the Nationalists' military capability and to try to convey to the Chinese Communists the general American commitment to the Nationalists. These actions were taken in light of American policy and planning in relation to Taiwan and the Offshore Islands.

Security Council Planning

The last formal action of the American government at the highest levels on policy toward Taiwan and the Offshore Islands prior to the 1958 crisis had been taken by the National Security Council (NSC) on October 4, 1957, when it had approved NSC 5723. In this paper NSC had *inter alia* stated the American intention to:

> seek to preserve, through the United Nations actions if appropriate, the *status quo* of the GRC-held off-shore islands. Provide to the GRC forces, military equipment and training to assist them to defend such off-shore islands, using Taiwan as a base. U. S. forces will be used to assist the Chinese Nationalists to defend GRC-held off-shore islands from Chinese Communist attack whenever the President judges such action to be required or appropriate in assuring the defense of Taiwan and the Penghus.[60]

The President's authority to defend the Offshore Islands was seen as deriving from the Congressional Formosa Resolution passed during the previous crisis of 1955. The Resolution read in part as follows:

> Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that the President of the United States be and he hereby is authorized to employ the Armed Forces of the United States as he deems necessary for the specific purpose of securing and protecting Formosa and the Pescadores against armed attack, *this authority to include the securing and protection of such related positions and territories of that area now in friendly hands* and the taking of such other measures as he judges to be *required or appropriate in assuring the defense* of Formosa and the Pescadores.[61] [Italics added.]

On April 23, 1958, the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) of the National Security Council approved a report which summarized the progress which had been made in implementing NSC 5723. The report noted that satisfactory progress was being made on all of the objectives stated in the NSC paper concerning the Republic of China and clarified the responsibility of the various services and agencies for implementing the policies concerned.[62] It predicted that for the immediate future the Chinese Communists would probably refrain from resorting to force but noted that the possibility remained that they might choose to apply various types of pressure against the Offshore Islands. The OCB report did indicate that the Chinese Communists had become increasingly active in intercepting GRC overflights and that this was likely to continue.

On May 29 the National Security Council in its last discussion of the Offshore Island situation prior to the signs of an impending crisis, simply "noted" the report of its Operations Coordinating Board, which did not recommend a review of policy towards Taiwan at that time.

National Intelligence Estimates

The Intelligence community on May 13, 1958, produced its annual "National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Communist China." A main element of the estimate was the prediction that events in Communist China would probably continue to follow the same pattern as over the preceding few years. The estimate reflected the universal belief in Washington at the time that there was no Sino-Soviet conflict. It noted, for example, that "although there will almost certainly be some frictions, these are unlikely to impair Sino-Soviet cooperation during the period of this estimate."[63]

The estimate did state, however, that there was some possibility of Sino-Soviet disagreement, in particular over areas where there was a great disparity of interest, such as in the Taiwan Straits, or where the parties differed over the risk involved in undertaking a specific action. In regard to specific Chinese Communist policy towards Taiwan and the Offshore Islands, the NIE said:

> Peiping is probably concerned that, as an unwanted by-product of peaceful coexistence, there is a growing acceptance of a "two-Chinas" concept. The Chinese Communists will continue their effort to disabuse the world, and especially other Asian leaders, of any idea that Communist China will renounce its intention to gain control of Taiwan. They will almost certainly not resort to military action to seize Taiwan, so long as this would involve risk of war with the United States. They will almost certainly continue their present efforts to undermine Nationalist will and to discredit the Republic of China abroad. The possibility cannot be

> excluded that the Chinese Communists will adopt a more aggressive policy toward the Offshore Islands, in part because of intense irritation and a sense of affront, in part to emphasize their determination to destroy the Nationalist Government, and in part to test U. S. intentions in the Taiwan area. If they should become convinced that the U. S. would not intervene militarily, they would seek to capture these Islands by military action.64 .

Thus while the NIE did suggest the possibility of Chinese action in the Taiwan Straits and of possible Sino-Soviet disagreement, the overall thrust of the estimate tended to contradict this prediction and to suggest that the Chinese would continue in close cooperation with the Soviets, and were at least not likely to undertake military action against the Offshore Islands. The estimate did point to what was in fact the major calculation of Peking -- United States intervention to defend the Offshore Islands.

Military Operations Plan

In addition to the periodic reevaluations of policy towards Taiwan which had been carried out by the staff of the National Security Council and by the U. S. Intelligence Board, the Military in May 1958 were putting the finishing touches to a revised Operations (OPS) Plan for the defense of the Taiwan Straits.

On May 16, 1958, CINCPAC released revised OPS PLAN 25-58 and distributed it to its subordinate commands. The plan had been previously approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). OPS PLAN 25-58 replaced a plan which had been in effect since 1955.* The new plan provided for the defense of Taiwan and the Penghus, and Matsu and "Chinmen" (Quemoy) when "dictated by appropriate U. S. authority." The basic plan called for operations in two phases; phase I was patrol and reconnaissance, which was then said to be under way; phase II was defeat of forces attacking Taiwan. It envisioned a possible third phase, if so directed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which would involve operations by the Strategic Air Command (SAC), supported by CINCPAC, of expanded air operations beyond the scope of the OPS PLAN to destroy the war-making capability of Communist China. The plan made a number of assumptions: The attack would be carried out in conditions short of total war; atomic weapons would be employed by the United States and probably by the enemy;** authority to attack targets on the Chinese mainland would be granted; the United States

---

*I have not been able to locate the 1955 plan in order to compare it with 25-58.

**The plan was altered on the 16th of August to allow the use of atomic weapons by the United States "when authorized by the President."

49-55 omitted

would provide logistical support to the GRC forces; and Japan would object to U. S. utilization of American bases and facilities in Japan unless Japan itself were directly threatened.

Basically, then, the operations plan in efffect at the outbreak of the crisis provided only for the current phase of patrol and reconnaissance by Chinese Nationalists and American ships and planes and for a situation in which there would be a Communist military offensive against Taiwan that would be countered by an American attack with atomic weapons against the Chinese mainland. The plan indicated to the CINCPAC subordinate commands that they should be prepared for partial implementation of the OPS PLAN in the event that support against enemies in other areas was required at the same time or the reinforcements expected in the report did not arrive, or authority to employ atomic weapons was not granted. The subordinate commands were also advised to coordinate the supporting plans with related general war plans so as to minimize the reduction of their general war capability.

Although the plan concentrated on defeating an enemy landing on Taiwan, in accord with Phase II, it recognized that there might be an intermediate stage between Phase I and Phase II. It noted that initial action by the Chinese Communists would probably be a minor probing activity, including the build-up of air strength, a demonstration of superiority in local air or ground firepower, and reconnaissance in strength. The plan noted that the purpose of the Communist probing would be to test American and GRC reaction. Following these limited probes, the next probable move was thought to be an attempt to obtain air superiority, through air attacks on airfields on Taiwan, and an attempt to destroy beach defenses by bombing. This would presumably be followed by an attempted landing on Taiwan. The OPS PLAN, however, provided for no counter U. S. actions to the probing stage. It advised subordinate commands as follows:

> There may be a 'transition phase' between the Phase I and the overt hostilities of Phase II in which the enemy will demonstrate his local military capability by probing activities short of all-out attack on Taiwan and the off-shore islands in order to determine what the U. S. reaction will be. COMUSTDC [Commander U. S. Taiwan Defense Command] must be prepared to make rapid analyses of these probing actions and to submit flash reports and recommend U. S. counter action to CINCPAC to facilitate an immediate U. S. decision. The timeliness of this decision and counter action may well determine whether the enemy will decide to proceed with his plans for attack.[65]

The OPS PLAN thus clearly pointed to what was likely to be the first Communist action -- a probe to test American intentions -- and recognized that the American response to this probe might well determine the future course of the crisis. Nevertheless the OPS PLAN provided no guidelines as to what the local commanders should do in the event of this kind of probe, nor did it authorize any action by American forces or permission for action by Chinese Nationalist forces in the event of this kind of probe. The OPS PLAN then pointed to the likely contingency, but the actions that it laid out were other contingencies.

At least part of the reason for this lay in the uncertainty over what U. S. policy was towards the defense of the Offshore Islands. Because of the wording of the Congressional Formosa Resolution of 1955, which authorized defense of the Offshore Islands only if necessary to defend Taiwan, the OPS PLAN did not plan specifically for the defense of the Offshore Islands. This made it difficult to make plans for the situations which it recognized were most likely to develop. Although political constraints required them to be circumspect on whether or not the Offshore Islands would be defended, it was clear from the OPS PLAN that the Joint Chiefs and CINCPAC were determined to defend the Offshore Islands and expected to get permission to do so. It should therefore have been feasible to produce a contingency plan to be used in the case of an attack directed initially and boldly at the Offshore Islands.

The OPS PLAN noted that "retention by the GRC of Taiwan and other GRC-held Islands will continue to pose a serious obstacle to the attainment of Communist objectives in the Far East and it is considered essential to U. S. interests." [Italics added.][66] In Annex B of the OPS PLAN on concepts of operation, the report noted that

> certain GRC-held offshore islands are important to the security of Taiwan and the Penghus and are of considerable significance to the political prestige of the GRC....tactically these islands provide GRC bases for intelligence gathering, maritime resistance, sabotage, evasion, and escape operation, and may facilitate early detection of and retaliation against a CHICOM [Chinese Communist] invasion. However, the continued possession of these Islands by the GRC is far more important politically and psychologically than tactically. These Islands are a symbol both to the CHINATS [Chinese Nationalists] themselves and to the mainland and overseas Chinese of the CHINAT intention not only to defend their present areas but also to recover the mainland from the Communists. Although the U. S. is not committed to participate in the defense of these islands, the U. S. has encouraged their continued defense by the GRC. Should these off-shore islands fall to the CHICOMS, the CHINATS (and the U. S.) would lose, and the CHICOMS would gain considerable prestige.

> An enemy invasion of Taiwan and the Penghus may or may not be preceded by an attempted seizure of those GRC-held offshore islands. While the seizure of these offshore islands would facilitate the later invasion of Taiwan, such an operation would cost the enemy tactical surprise, would permit a corresponding build-up of GRC and U. S. preparations for defense and would afford the U. S. more time to put into effect specific courses of action.
>
> In the event of U. S. participation in the defense of these GRC-held off-shore islands it is dictated by appropriate U. S. authority, defensive operations conducted by CINCPACAF [Commander in Chief Pacific Air Force] and CINCPACFLT [Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet] will be coordinated locally by COMUSTDC in accordance with this plan. In the event Taiwan and the Penghus are attacked at the same time as the off-shore islands, the defense of Taiwan and the Penghus has over-riding priority.[67]

The OPS PLAN indicated that the "Offshore Islands" referred to in the paragraphs just quoted included six islands in the Quemoy group: Big Quemoy, Little Quemoy, Ta-tan, Ehr-tan, Hu-tzu Hsu and Tung-ting-hsu and seven islands in the Matsu chain. As we shall see, with the outbreak of the crisis, the group of islands which the United States decided to include in the Offshore Island chain that it would defend was reduced to the Islands of Big Quemoy and Little Quemoy and five Islands in the Matsu group.*

---

*See p. 115.

The OPS PLAN which was in effect at the time of crisis was almost entirely inappropriate to the actual course of events. Even in its consideration of the Offshore Islands, though the planners correctly anticipated that the United States would want to defend them, the plan overestimated the number of islands which the United States would be interested in defending and assumed that atomic weapons would be employed against the mainland in their defense. In the midst of the crisis it became necessary to issue an Annex H to the OPS PLAN for conventional operations in defense of Quemoy.

Although the overall OPS PLAN was issued by CINCPAC on May 16, 1958, in the absence of any sense of urgency, it took several months for subordinate headquarters to produce their supporting operational plan. It was not, for example, until August 7 that CINCPACAF distributed the main part of the Pacific Air Force (PACAF) interim OPS PLAN 25-58 to its subordinate commanders.[68] The interim atomic annex was issued two days later.[69] The PACAF OPS PLAN for the guidance of air units indicated that Phase II, the phase immediately following patrol and reconnaissance, would involve atomic weapons strikes by both sides. The Thirteenth Air Force Commander was to direct atomic operations, and the initial operations were to emphasize pre-planned strikes against enemy air bases. No conventional operations by the Thirteenth Air Force were planned.[70] On August 14 CINCPACFLT issued Change No. 1 in CINCPACFLT 25-57 to anticipate some of the changes called for in CINCPAC 25-58.[71]

When the shelling began on August 23, the subordinate commands to CINCPACAF and the Taiwan Defense Command had yet to promulgate final versions of their OPS PLAN in support of CINCPAC OPS PLAN 25-58, so that even this contingency plan, which was to have little immediate relevance to the crisis, was not fully ready when the crisis broke out.

Limited War Contingency Planning

Along with these three routine contingency planning operations by the National Security Council, the U.S. Intelligence Board, and the military, a fourth contingency planning operation for the possible defense of the Offshore Islands was underway but not completed at the time of the outbreak of the crisis.

At the request of President Eisenhower, a joint State-Defense-CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] committee had been created to study possible limited war contingencies.

The Committee had agreed on a total of twelve possible contingencies outside Europe. Half of the scenarios covered the Far East, one involving the Offshore Islands.* This latter contingency plan envisioned a Chinese Communist interdiction and an American expansion of the crisis to include atomic attack against the Chinese mainland. The first meetings of the State-Defense-CIA group on the Offshore Island contingency planning brought into contact with each other the people who were later to work together during the crisis. At the first meeting the State Department participants held out for an attempt to develop a plan which would involve the use of only conventional (HE) weapons by American forces in defense of the Offshore Islands. However the Joint Chiefs, in particular Air Force General Nathan Twining, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, felt that the use of atomic weapons was inevitable and the planning proceeded on that assumption.

In considering how the Chinese Communists might succeed in interdicting the Offshore Islands, the committee considered the possibility of successful interdiction by the use of artillery alone. However, this possibility was played down, particularly on the advice of Chief of Staff of the

---

*The others in the Far East were Korea, Indonesia, Thailand, Laos and Burma.

Army, General Lyman Lemnitzer, who felt that such interdiction was impossible. General Leander Doan, a former head of the Military Advisory Assistance Group (MAAG) on Taiwan, expressed reservations and indicated that he felt artillery interdiction might be successful.* However, the study proceeded on the assumption that a Chinese Communist move against the Offshore Islands would involve aerial as well as artillery interdiction followed by American atomic attacks on mainland airfields.[73]

The contingency paper was not yet concluded when the crisis broke out. In fact, as signs of a real crisis in the Taiwan Straits began to develop, the committee's operation changed suddenly from preparing a series of contingency papers on possible limited wars to actual planning for the crisis which was about to break out. When the shelling started, the contingency paper was rewritten in State by Marshall Green, Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs and a State Department representative on the planning committee, in an effort to fit it to the actual situation of artillery interdiction.[74]

---

*Doan may have been influenced by an internal Taiwan Defense Command paper drafted in January 1958 which declared that: "Since CHICOM artillery fire can completely blanket the Kinmen [Quemoy] Island complex from its present positions on nearby islands and the mainland, it is possible that the CHICOMS may attempt to 'starve out' the garrisons on these islands primarily by the means of intermittent or sustained artillery fire, possibly supported by air. Such an operation...would be time-consuming and expensive ...."[72]

The Warsaw Talks

It will be recalled that on June 30, 1958, the Chinese Communists had presented the American Government with an ultimatum that unless the Sino-American talks were resumed in fifteen days the Chinese Communists would consider them broken off permanently. At this point the American Government had no inkling that a crisis in the Taiwan Straits might be brewing.

After carefully allowing more than fifteen days to elapse, Edwin Martin of the American Embassy in London was instructed to write to Wang Ping-nan, Chinese Communist Ambassador to Poland, telling him that American Ambassador to Poland Jacob D. Beam was available to resume the talks. Martin was to follow this by contacting Wang directly to try to arrange a meeting for the second week in August at the earliest.[75] The letter was actually delivered on July 28 with immediate follow-up by Beam in which he stated that the United States was proposing a "normal" resumption of the talks, and that this was not the result of the Chinese Communist demand.[76] By August 8 Beam still had not had a reply to his informal approaches or to the Martin letter and was instructed to await a Chinese Communist initiative for reopening the Warsaw talks.[77] By the 15th Washington informed Beam that it was considering making public the Martin-Beam approaches so as to stress the fact that the Chinese Communists were procrastinating in responding and thereby delaying the reopening of the Warsaw talks.

By the time of the outbreak of the bombardment on August 23 no answer had been received from the Chinese Communists, though they had had a firm offer by the United States to resume the talks at the Ambassadorial level, the sole demand they had proposed for reopening the talks. They could thus be reasonably confident that the talks could be opened any time they chose to respond to the Beam-Martin approaches.

The Crisis Approaches

The first American planning for a possible impending crisis in the Taiwan Straits came in mid-July when, in response to the outbreak of the Middle East crisis, Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Arleigh Burke ordered an alert of CINCPAC forces on July 14.

With the dying down of the Middle East crisis, attention of the Pacific forces continued to focus on the possibility that the scene of crisis would switch to the Far East. For example, PACAF intelligence estimated on July 23 that the next crisis in the world would be in the Taiwan Straits, and on July 26 the Pacific Command watch reported that the Chinese Communists were increasing their combat readiness in South China.

During the early part of August, intelligence officers in the Far East became increasingly convinced that a crisis was likely to break out in the Taiwan Straits. Washington officials remained unconvinced, though they were willing to sanction a military build-up in the area in case the estimates should turn out to be correct.

On August 2 the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the CIA both concluded that the evidence of a Chinese Communist build-up and other military moves did not suggest a Communist intention to take offensive action. American officials on Taiwan were advised that it was important to allay the concern being expressed by the GRC and to prevent the bombing of coastal airfields which were occupied by the Chinese Communists. At the same time Admiral Burke, who was the executive agent through whom orders went to

CINCPAC,* did propose a further meeting of the Joint Chiefs to continue discussion of the Chinese Communist build-up.[78]

Despite the skepticism at the upper levels that offensive action by the Chinese Communists was likely in the near future, a number of steps were taken in the first two weeks of August to bolster American military capability in the Taiwan Straits, and to convey to the Chinese Communists a general sense of American commitment.

The military command structure in the Taiwan Straits had been changed in early 1958, when, with JCS approval, the Taiwan Defense Command and the MAAG mission on Taiwan were combined in a single headquarters under Vice Admiral Smoot (COMUSTDC). The Commander of Air Task Force 13 (P) became Chief of Staff and Chief of the Air Force section of the MAAG. The Army head of MAAG was put under the Taiwan Defense Commander. This reorganization provided a single point of contact between American military officials on Taiwan and the GRC.[79]

In February of 1958 a Matador unit had arrived on Taiwan with ten Matadors and nuclear warheads and they had been on a twenty-four hour alert status ever since. No atomic warheads for air delivery had been stationed on Taiwan, but weapons were available on Okinawa and other nearby points which could be brought in quickly. The weapons were primarily MK-7s and had yields of two to sixty kilotons. A storage facility to receive the warheads had been built on Taiwan.[80]

---

*The crisis occurred just prior to the reorganization of 1958 under which orders went directly from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the unified and specified commands. At this point Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Burke was still the Executive Agent for CINCPAC operations and as such played a leading role in discussions in Washington on the

On August 1 CINCPAC, being informed of the Chinese Communist occupation of an airfield opposite Taiwan, began a crisis diary. It received and forwarded a Taiwan Defense Command request to expedite the delivery of Sidewinders to the GRC.[81] On August 3 the first U. S. military move directly related to the possible impending crisis took place when six U. S. F-100's were deployed to Taiwan. On the 5th, with JCS approval, the Chief of Naval Operations directed an Attack Aircraft Carrier (CVA) group to proceed to the Taiwan area. Two ships were directed to sail up and down the Straits continuously and did so throughout the crisis. The Joint Chiefs also approved the Taiwan Defense Command request to send F-86's modified for the use of Sidewinders to the Chinese Nationalists as soon as possible.[82] On the following day PACAF alerted its units for an impending crisis,[83] and requested policy guidance from CINCPAC with respect to rules of engagement.[84]

By August 20, F-86s modified for Sidewinder use which had been intended for other sources had been diverted for delivery to the Chinese Nationalists, and forty Sidewinders had been authorized for delivery to the Chinese Nationalists. There had been a rotation of F-100s to Taiwan, and preparations had been made to conduct a routine air exercise off Taiwan. Additional proposals were under consideration to accelerate the shipment of equipment to the Chinese Nationalists.[85] American military moves which could be detected by the Chinese Communists prior to August 23 are indicated in Table 9. One U.S. military action not easily visible to the Chinese Communists was the placing on alert of five SAC B-47s at Guam on August 17. These aircraft had the mission of hitting the coastal airfields opposite Taiwan with nuclear weapons under night or bad weather conditions.[86]

The Joint Chiefs advised the Secretary of Defense on August 6 of the steps that they had approved to increase American military capability in the Taiwan Straits. They also raised the question, which was not to be faced by the top levels of the government until after the crisis broke out, of what in fact American policy was for the defense of the Offshore Islands.[87]

---

*Eisenhower reports that he first received word of a possible Chinese Communist move against the Offshore Islands

Table 9

U. S. MILITARY MOVES IN THE PACIFIC

Prior to August 23, 1958

Date	Move
July 14	CINCPAC Forces went on Alert Status
August 3	6 U. S. F-100's Deployed to Taiwan
August 5	2 U. S. Ships began sailing continuously up and down Taiwan Strait
August 6	PACAF Units went on Alert
August 8	6 F86D aircraft temporarily deployed to Taiwan

SOURCE: Seventh Fleet Chronology: INR Chronology June 30 to September 26, 1958; Briefs by General Lawrence S. Kuter at Z. I. Commanders Conference; Patrick Air Force Base, November 20-21, 1958 (Secret); CINCPAC Taiwan Diary; Leonard Weinstein, "Quemoy Matsu Crisis -- 1958," Weapons Systems Laboratory Research Memorandum WS241, Stanford Research Institute, June, 1960 (Top Secret).

After urging the need for the expanding of military support to the GRC and outlining the steps which the Joint Chiefs had approved, the JCS Memorandum to the Secretary of Defense continued as follows:

> Because of political considerations involved in the decision to deploy additional forces to the Far East, and in possible military actions which could occur in that area, it is requested that you secure from the Secretary of State policy guidance which would assist the JCS in refining present plans to meet likely contingencies particularly with respect to Communist attack on the Off-shore Islands.[88]

On August 8 the State Department through an official spokesman noted that the Chinese Communists were building air strips in the area to "increase tension and raise the spectre of war." And the spokesman continued: "We are watching the situation closely."*[89]

---

on August 6, presumably as a result of the JCS memorandum (see Dwight D. Eisenhower, Waging Peace, New York: Doubleday, 1965, p. 292).

*The State Department was reported by The New York Times to be concerned but not alarmed about possible Chinese Communist action, but Brigadier General Thomas R. Phillips in the St. Louis Post Dispatch, reflecting the views of lower level officials, reported that the government was taking the build-up very seriously and that it was believed that Quemoy could not be defended without nuclear weapons.[90]

On the same day a meeting was held at the State Department at which it was decided to establish liaison at the working level between State, Defense, and the CIA, and to begin contingency planning for a possible crisis in the Taiwan Straits. This was the first meeting on the impending crisis which Secretary of State Dulles attended, and he did not again attend until August 22, two weeks later.[91] The Far East Bureau of State was to prepare a paper examining the political aspects of the situation, including current official policy with relation to the Offshore Islands as expressed in NSC-5723.* The CIA was to prepare an assessment of Chinese Communist intentions and possible courses of action. The Defense Department was to study the military aspects, including the military capability of the two sides. It was anticipated that the three studies would then be worked into a single contingency planning study. Although this was ultimately not done, the planning instigated by the meeting found its way into a number of papers later prepared in the three agencies.[92]

Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Walter Robertson, at the same time was sending his first of a series of memoranda on the crisis to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and Under Secretary of State Christian Herter (who was to be the Acting Secretary at many of the points during the coming weeks). In this memorandum of August 8, which was actually addressed to the Acting Secretary, Robertson noted that during the preceding week the Chinese Communists had deployed advanced-type aircraft, probably MIG-17's, to coastal airfields opposite Taiwan which were previously not operational. He indicated that there was no evidence of a corresponding build-up in ground and naval forces in Fukien Province opposite Taiwan.

---

*See above, pp.

In attempting to evaluate the implications of the Chinese Communist Air Force build-up, Robertson noted that it represented at a minimum a decision to defend the mainland air space against GRC incursions. Reconnaissance and other aerial operations would, he predicted, be impeded, if not prevented, in the future. The Assistant Secretary went on to say that he believed that it was "highly possible" that the move represented the first of a series of probing actions designed to test GRC and American reactions. He predicted that the next step might be to attempt to assert air control over the Taiwan Straits, with the aim of interdicting the Offshore Islands and forcing the GRC forces to face attrition or withdraw. Robertson suggested that the Chinese Communists might be planning to provoke a crisis in order to create demands for their participation in a conference of the heads of governments of the big powers which had been mentioned in the Mao-Khrushchev communiqué of August 3. Robertson noted that a successful interdiction of the Offshore Islands would pose major problems for the United States since the loss of the Islands would be grave, involving the loss of one-third of the Chinese Nationalist armed forces. He noted that the GRC was determined to fight for the Islands and that the failure of the United States to act would severely damage GRC morale and adversely affect American relations with other of its allies.

Robertson also reported on the Drumright-Smoot conversation with Chiang on August 4.* He noted that Chiang's request for U. S. Sidewinders and the expedited delivery of F-86's and a show of force by the 7th Fleet had been implemented, but that Chiang's request for the stationing of additional F-100's on Taiwan was regarded as impractical for logistical reasons. He noted finally that the GRC had declared a full alert of their armed forces and had taken emergency measures on Taiwan and the Offshore Islands, but that they appeared to have become calmer in the last few days.[93]

---

*See above, pp.

On August 12 Gordon Gray, the President's Special Assistant for National Security Council Affairs, and the head of the staff of the National Security Council, requested the Joint Chiefs to consider a series of possible Chinese Communist moves in the Taiwan Straits and to propose American responses. The situations as outlined by Gray were:

> Chinese Communist aggressive air action in the Straits.
>
> Chinese Communist air penetration of Taiwan.
>
> Chinese Communist blockade by sea and air of the Offshore Islands.
>
> Chinese Communist assault on Taiwan and the Pescadores.

Gray also asked whether any public statement of the American position should be made.[94] This request to the Joint Staff was to initiate yet another contingency planning operation, a bare twelve days before the outbreak of military action. Yet among the contingencies listed by Gray and considered by the Joint Chiefs was still not one which was to follow closely the course of events as the crisis unfolded.

The Joint Chiefs met on the 13th for a general discussion of the Taiwan situation and for an intelligence briefing. They were told that the Chinese Communists now had the capability to control the air over the coastal areas, and over the Offshore Islands, if opposed only by the GRC.[95]

Marshall Green on the same day sent a second internal State Department memorandum urging a strong stand in defense of the Offshore Islands. The memorandum declared that a loss of the Offshore Islands could lead to a Chinese Communist takeover in Taiwan. It ruled out completely the possibility of getting Chiang Kai-shek to abandon voluntarily the Offshore Islands at the time. The risk of war, the memorandum stated, would come largely from enemy miscalculation. The Chinese Communists might think that the United States would not defend the Offshore Islands and might engage in air and naval interdiction as contemplated in the State-JCS limited war study. Their purpose, the memorandum suggested, would be either to force a Tachen-Island-type withdrawal* or to establish a successful air and sea interdiction. If the United States did intervene, the Chinese Communists might withdraw and seek to portray the United States as a nuclear warmonger. Therefore, the memorandum concluded, the most obvious means of eliminating enemy miscalculation would be a clear U. S. declaration of intent to defend the Offshore Islands. Short of this the United States might declare its support of the GRC, speed up modernization of the GRC army, send U. S. aircraft to Taiwan, and concentrate the 7th Fleet near Taiwan.[96] On the same day that Green sent this memorandum, Dulles left Washington on a vacation which lasted from August 13-22.[97]

---

*In 1954 the Chinese Nationalists withdrew from the Tachens under Chinese Communist fire and with American support.

At the same time U. S. Air Force Commander in the Pacific General Lawrence Kuter was requesting guidance from the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General Thomas B. White, as to what action the United States should take if air action against Quemoy and Matsu should lead the GRC to attack bases on the Chinese mainland. White brought this subject to Twining's attention with the suggestion that it be discussed at an NSC meeting on the 14th.[98]

The National Security Council meeting on the 14th was the first session of the Council which considered the impending Taiwan Straits crisis. The NSC a paper entitled "The Situation in the Taiwan Strait Area," which had been prepared by the NSC staff. The topic was put on the agenda by Gray, who sought a discussion but no decision. State Department officials were opposed to the discussion on the grounds that the necessary staff work had not yet been done.[99] The NSC staff paper began by quoting NSC-5723 and the Congressional Formosa Resolution, which authorized the defense of Quemoy and Matsu when necessary to the defense of Taiwan.

The third section of the NSC staff paper paralleled the memorandum which Gordon Gray had sent to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but which they had not yet had time to evaluate. The memorandum noted that in the light of the recently increased Chinese Communist operational capabilities to take offensive action, discussion (but no decisions) on three questions would be useful. The three questions raised were:

a. What action should the United States take if the Chinese Communists blockade the Offshore Islands by sea and air with a view to forcing its surrender?

b. What should the response of the United States be to a major assault on the Offshore Islands ("for purposes of this question it is assumed that a U. S. decision to oppose by force a Chinese Communist attempt to seize the GRC-held Offshore Islands would involve a decision to use nuclear weapons on targets on mainland China.")

c. What steps should the United States take publicly or otherwise to state its policy toward the Chinese Communist efforts to gain control of the GRC-held Offshore Islands by force?[100]

Apparently the National Security Council merely noted the developing problem in the Taiwan Straits and the issue was referred for discussion to a meeting held the following day in the Pentagon.* This meeting was attended by the Joint Chiefs, Gordon Gray, Christian A. Herter (as Acting Secretary of State) and General Charles P. Cabell (as Acting Director of the CIA). The meeting was called by Herter, who began the session by noting that the State Department needed to know the Joint Chiefs' thoughts and general plans on the defense of the Offshore Islands before making further moves. Reflected in Herter's question was the typical effort of State and Defense to get each other's assessment of the situation before determining policy. The Joint Chiefs, it will be recalled, a week earlier had asked the Secretary of Defense to secure from the State Department its estimate of what U. S. objectives would be so that it could proceed with its military planning. Though the JCS had not yet received a response to this request, they were now being asked by Herter to give their views of the military situation so that State could proceed with political planning. In the absence of a clear Presidential decision on whether or not the Offshore Islands would be defended, and, if they were to be defended, with what means, neither State nor JCS could provide firm guidance to the other.

---

*As far as can be determined this was the last formal National Security Council meeting held to consider the crisis; the other formal NSC machinery -- the Planning Board and the OCB -- were also inactive during the crisis.

The absence of Secretary of State Dulles from the meeting and from Washington made it even more difficult to make any firm decisions. The discussion at the meeting turned on the questions of what the likely Chinese Communist action would be, what the United States might do to try to head it off, and what the United States should do if the Chinese Communists made a military move against the Offshore Islands. Both Robertson and Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force General Curtis LeMay strongly urged that it was not just the Offshore Islands that were at stake but the whole position of the United States in the Far East. Chief of Staff of the Army General Maxwell Taylor was the only Defense Department official present who voiced any doubts as to whether the United States really wanted to stake so much on the defense of these Islands. The head of the Policy Planning Staff, Gerard Smith, and Robert Murphy, Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, both expressed some skepticism about a strong policy, and Murphy raised the question of whether there was any possibility of getting the GRC to evacuate the Offshore Islands. However, the general consensus of the meeting, particularly as it reflected the view of Assistant Secretary Robertson, was that it would be impossible to get the GRC to evacuate the Offshore Islands. The former Taiwan MAAG head, General Leander Doan, who was present at the meeting, reported that GRC plans were for holding the Offshore Islands at all costs. He stated that the GRC would try to reinforce the Islands if necessary and would use their Air Force and Navy "in a fight to the finish" over the Offshore Islands.

Apparently largely under the influence of the contingency planning for the possibility of an attack on the

Offshore Islands, in which many of those at the meeting had been engaged, a general unstated assumption at the meeting was that an interdiction attempt against the Offshore Islands would be by air and sea since it was believed that artillery interdiction could not be successful. Twining expressed the view that the GRC must try to cope alone initially with any air and sea interdiction campaign. Any blockade would take a long time to become a complete success, he said, and before it did become completely successful the United States would intervene. Under questioning by Herter, Twining made it clear that the United States would have to use nuclear weapons against Chinese air bases to prevent a successful air interdiction campaign by the Chinese Communists. He noted that the U. S. military would begin by attacking a few of the fields in the Amoy area, using low-yield ten to fifteen kiloton nuclear weapons. At this point the Chinese Communists hopefully would break off. But if they did not, the United States, Twining indicated, would have no alternative but to conduct nuclear strikes deep into China as far north as Shanghai. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs suggested that this would almost certainly involve nuclear retaliation against Taiwan and possibly against Okinawa, but he stressed that if national policy is to defend the

Offshore Islands then the consequences had to be accepted.* In response to a question by Smith, Twining expressed the view that the Chinese Communist Air Force could not be successfully opposed by simply engaging it in the air over the Offshore Islands. The United States, if it was not to lose such a battle, would need to hit bases.

Taylor urged the Department of State to clarify what the United States wanted to hold and stressed that the minimum force necessary to hold these areas should be used.

Herter and Twining expressed concern, as Washington officials were to do throughout the crisis, over the possibility that the GRC might engage in some action against the mainland which would lead to a United States-Communist Chinese war. But Herter was assured by Robertson that the GRC was pledged to consult the United States before bombing the mainland and would honor the agreement.

Twining urged that the decision be taken now as to whether or not the United States would defend against interdiction as well as against a direct attack on the Islands. It was assumed by those at the meeting that the United States would oppose a direct attack against the Islands, but nobody present knew whether the United States would defend against an interdiction attempt, nor was there anybody present who had the authority to make the decision.

---

*There was no discussion of whether the Chinese were expected to get nuclear weapons from Russia or whether the Russians would attack Taiwan. The possibility that there would be no nuclear retaliation to an American nuclear attack on mainland China does not seem to have been viewed as a serious possibility. In part at least this reflected normal planning caution; however, it was also a reflection of the then current [illegible] of close Sino-Soviet cooperation.

The meeting concluded with a discussion of a point raised by Robertson as to whether or not the United States should make a public statement which might have the effect of deterring the Chinese Communists from attacking or interdicting the Offshore Islands. This was rejected in favor of a private approach through diplomatic channels, either by John Foster Dulles approaching Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko directly or by a message sent via the British Ambassador in Peking. Robertson suggested that if asked at a press conference as to what the U. S. position was, the President or the Secretary of State should follow the proposal of the Chinese Nationalist Foreign Minister and simply say that a Communist attack would be disturbing to the peace of Asia. Twining indicated that he would prefer simply a reference to the Congressional Formosa Resolution.

The meeting ended with the group agreeing that a decision needed to be taken at the Dulles-Eisenhower level.

as to what the U.S. reaction would be to an air-sea interdiction campaign against the Offshore Islands. It was also agreed that the Chinese Communists should be warned through diplomatic channels that the United States would not tolerate capture of the Offshore Islands.[101]*

Following the meeting at the Pentagon, Herter drafted a memorandum to Secretary of State Dulles in which he summarized the discussion and reported its conclusions. He noted that State and the Joint Chiefs were agreed that the loss of the Offshore Islands would lead to an attack on Taiwan. Herter reported that the meeting confirmed his own view that there was a need to warn the Chinese Communists that if they attempted to seize Quemoy and Matsu by assault or interdiction, they would run the clear risk of U.S. military countermeasures to keep the Islands in GRC hands. While this seemed to Herter to be the most effective way to preserve the Islands as well as the peace, he noted that it also involved serious risks.

---

*The Joint Chiefs of Staff, at a meeting held on the 15th, apparently after the meeting with Herter, decided in principle to build up and maintain the GRC Air Force in a position of qualitative superiority to the Chinese Communists.[102] They recommended that six F-100Bs which had been earmarked for NATO be diverted to Taiwan. This request was approved by Secretary of Defense Neil McElroy on the 21st.[103]

Herter recommended to Dulles that a warning be sent to the Chinese Communists through diplomatic channels. However, he cautioned that if the United States made such a warning, it must be prepared to defend the Islands. Herter suggested that Dulles confer with Eisenhower with a view towards agreeing to convey informally to Gromyko the information that the United States would prevent seizure or successful interdiction of the Offshore Islands. He also stressed the importance of considering the Congressional implications of U.S. action. If the issue came up at a Dulles press conference, Herter recommended that Eisenhower fall back on the Congressional Formosa Resolution.[104]

The Herter memorandum was reinforced early the following week by a memorandum from Assistant Secretary of State Robertson to Dulles. In the memorandum Robertson stressed that it was time to make a decision on whether to defend the Offshore Islands. He again summarized the meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and stressed that the Joint Chiefs felt that it was highly advisable to warn Peking that any attempt to seize Quemoy and Matsu by assault or interdiction ran the clear risk of U.S. military moves to hold the Island. However, as Herter had done, Robertson noted that if the United States did warn Peking, it must be prepared to make good and hence a decision was needed as soon as possible. If a decision should be made not to defend the Offshore Islands under any circumstances, then, Robertson recommended the United States should make an intense effort to force a withdrawal before a blockade by the Chinese Communists began, since a blockade (again under the assumption of air and sea action) would be successful. Under these circumstances the United States should not make any military moves or give any private warnings of intentions.

However, Robertson strongly stated that the United States must decide to defend the Offshore Islands under all circumstances if Taiwan was to be held. The decision ? to defend should be a closely held secret, but the United States should, Robertson urged, make a series of moves to deter the Chinese Communists.

The memo concluded that the United States should defend the Offshore Islands for the following reasons, even if the use of nuclear weapons were required:

1. The United States could not force a withdrawal by the Chinese Nationalists at this time.
2. An attempt to force a withdrawal would shatter GRC confidence or lead to an attack on the mainland.

3. There would be concern in Korea, Vietnam, and elsewhere if the United States tried to force a withdrawal.
4. A withdrawal would not liquidate the crisis since the Chinese Communists were really after Taiwan.
5. The Soviets wanted to avoid nuclear war and would restrain the Chinese Communists. The Chinese Communists would also restrain themselves if they believed the United States would defend the Offshore Islands.
6. The United States had some conventional capability and therefore blockade-running and HE bombing should be tried before nuclear weapons were used.

The memorandum concluded with the following four recommendations:

1. A decision to defend under any circumstances should be reached by the Secretary of State and the President.
2. Peking should be warned through diplomatic channels, perhaps through the Soviet Union, that the United States would defend the Offshore Islands.

3. Eisenhower should say in any case that a Chinese Communist attack on the Offshore Islands would be disturbing to the peace in Asia.*
4. There should be an increased military build-up both of U. S. and GRC forces.[105]

Based on the NSC discussion and the meeting afterwards, LeMay responded to Kuter's request for guidance. He informed the Pacific Air Force Commander that should the contingency arise of a wholly unexpected Chinese Communist attack on the Offshore Islands, the United States must be prepared for immediate retaliation. The best means of neutralizing the Chinese Communist Air Force quickly, LeMay noted, would be simultaneous strikes against the coastal airfields using Guam-based SAC B-47's in order to catch the bulk of the Chinese Communist aircraft on the ground. Kuter was advised that SAC had been alerted for this purpose and that if Chinese Communist Beagles were moved south, it might be necessary to augment the Guam capability. Kuter was instructed, in what was the first of a series of modifications of the OPS PLAN which were to become necessary as American strategy to deal with the crisis unfolded, to modify OPS PLAN 25-58 to include this concept. Kuter's advice on these directives was requested before final JCS decision.106 On the following day Kuter responded by concurring in the proposal that the GRC be permitted to bomb airfields if the Chinese Communists used air attacks against the Offshore Islands. He noted that a second step still short of Phase II of 25-58 might be desirable. "There would be merit in a proposal from the military to limit the war geographically [to the newly operational Chinese Communist air bases] if that proposal would forestall some misguided humanitarian's intention to limit a war to obsolete iron bombs and hot lead."107 This was to be the first of a series of actions by Kuter designed to make it clear that he felt the United States should not fight with just HE weapons should it be forced into a war in the Taiwan Straits.

---

*Herter, who feared that the GRC might try to drag the United States into a war with Communist China, had in his memorandum adopted Twining's suggestion that Eisenhower should simply refer to the Congressional Formosa Resolution. Robertson, as he was to do throughout the crisis, defended the GRC as a loyal ally and sought the adoption of the GRC proposal.

On August 18 the American Ambassador in Tokyo, Douglas MacArthur II, reported that there was real concern in certain quarters within the Japanese Government over the mounting tension in the Taiwan Straits. He noted that should the United States become involved in military hostilities involving only Quemoy and Matsu, the United States should be prepared for a Japanese request not to use U. S. bases in Japan for military operations.[108] However, after receiving this information the Air Staff was able to report that this would not affect current operations plans since, as has been previously noted, CINCPAC OPS PLAN 25-58 assumed the Japanese bases would not be available. It was indicated that other bases could handle this situation.[109] It should be noted, however, that the CINCPAC OPS PLAN assumed that the U. S. operation would be largely an atomic air attack directed against the Chinese airfields, and that the notion that the Japanese bases were not needed was simply the belief that the airfields could effectively be attacked without the use of the Japanese bases. It did not preclude the possibility that in a long drawn-out conventional operation, which might have ensued in the Taiwan Straits, Japanese bases would be needed.

On the same day, the Joint Staff completed a paper in response to the August 12 request from Gordon Gray for the Joint Chiefs to consider a number of possible alternatives in the Taiwan Straits and propose U. S. courses of action. The memorandum was tabled at the Joint Chiefs [illegible] of August 20 but no action was taken. The memorandum considered each of the situations posed by Gray and recommended U. S. courses of action as indicated in Table 10. The paper assumed that the United States should take whatever action was necessary to hold the Offshore Islands. It reached a more optimistic conclusion than Twining expressed at the State-JCS meeting during the previous week on what would be needed to cope with an air and sea interdiction effort. The Joint Staff paper suggested that U. S. air and sea cover would be sufficient to break the blockade. The study, however, confirmed Twining's belief that nuclear weapons would have to be used to defeat an invasion attempt. Gray also had asked what steps the United States should take publicly or otherwise to state its policy towards the Chinese Communist effort to take the Offshore Islands. The Joint Chiefs recommended that no steps be taken.[110]

On the 22nd, the Joint Chiefs noted a report completed by the Joint Staff on August 15 which was used in supplying the answers to Gray's questions. The study concluded that the Chinese Communists would use approximately 230,000 troops if they tried to assault Quemoy. These forces were reported to be available in the area, and it was believed that the 2,000 junks in the area augmented by rafts and

Table 10

JOINT STAFF RESPONSE TO GRAY QUESTIONS

Situation Listed in Gray Memorandum	Joint Staff Suggested "U. S. Proposed Course of Action"
Situation A: Chinese Communists without blockading become increasingly aggressive in the air over the Taiwan Straits, provoking incident.	1. Increase military aid to GRC (Sidewinders are on way and this should be announced). 2. U. S. should assume Taiwan air defense, which would mean more U. S. aircraft. 3. Increased show of U. S. force. 4. No GRC bombing of mainland. The Chinese Communists might in this situation be trying to provoke the GRC.
Situation B: Chinese Communist Air Force penetrates air space over Taiwan or Pescadores.	1. U. S. should resist by employing U. S. Air Force forces available on Taiwan and 7th Fleet air. U. S. planes should be used only if the GRC cannot handle the situation and against planes making an attack. 2. If there is a very large penetration, U. S. Air Force aircraft could attack mainland air bases, using conventional and nuclear weapons. However, an effective attack would require nuclear weapons. An attack against coastal airfields could be carried out without bringing on a full-scale U. S.-Chinese

Table 10 -- continued

Situation Listed in Gray Memorandum	Joint Staff Suggested "U. S. Proposed Course of Action"
	Communist war. However if the Chinese Communists did not cease, the U. S. would have to attack more airfields.
Situation C: Chinese Communist Blockade of the GRC-held Offshore Islands by sea and air with view to forcing surrender without landing troops.	1. U. S. to provide air cover and naval escort for re-supply. This would be effective in holding the islands and would be a natural extension of current U. S. policy. 2. Failure to take necessary naval and air action would result in the collapse of the GRC forces on the Offshore Islands. This would impair the faith of the GRC in the U. S. 3. The U. S. could not afford to let the Offshore Islands be lost by any means, including blockade.
Situation D: Chinese Communists launch a major assault on the Offshore Islands.	1. Action under C also applies. 2. U. S. should issue ultimatum of retaliation and bring issue to UN -- U. S. should seek UN endorsement but cannot wait for it. 3. The U. S. should use its full strength to defeat the attack, involving the use of nuclear weapons by the United States. The use of SAC would be required, as well as the reinforcement of local forces.

Table 10 -- continued

Situation Listed in Gray Memorandum	Joint Staff Suggested "U. S. Proposed Course of Action"
Situation E: Chinese Communist attack against Taiwan and the Pescadores.	Same as D, without ultimatum, and there would be a need for atomic attack against sea-based forces.

SOURCE: Chiefs of Staff Memorandum for General Twining, General White, General Taylor, General Pate, Admiral Burke, Subject: Consideration of courses of U. S. Action with respect to Taiwan (U), Signed Oliver S. Pitcher, General, USAF, Director Joint Staff, JSC DM 280-58, August 20, 1958 (Top Secret).

declass.

floats could lift the force. The study indicated that the Chinese Nationalist forces on Quemoy were not excessive for a maximum defense effort.[111]

On the same day, for the first time since August 8, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles (having just returned from a vacation)[112] attended a meeting to discuss the crisis. In attendance in addition to State Department officials were General Twining, Admiral Burke, and CIA Director and brother of the Secretary of State, Allen Dulles. The meeting began with a briefing by Allen Dulles on the military situation, which was later to be published as an Annex to SNIE 100-9-58. The CIA Director reported that there were over 100,000 troops on Quemoy and Matsu with thirty to forty days of supplies and that the Chinese Communists had not been trying as yet to intercept supplies.

John Foster Dulles expressed misgivings about the willingness and ability of the GRC to fight and hold the Offshore Islands. He stated that he did not want to help the GRC if they would not fight to the death. He was assured by Robertson that the GRC would fight and that they could hold an attack for at least a week. Dulles then stated that if the Nationalists would hold the Offshore

Islands for at least a week against an invasion, the United States would be drawn in. It was estimated at the meeting that Quemoy could hold out against a blockade for at least thirty days. The Secretary of State stressed that the United States should continue to look as if it would welcome a fight as this tactic was most likely to deter the Communists. He expressed the view that the Chinese Communists would not start anything except by miscalculation, that is, if they believed that the United States might not intervene. The possibility of sending a note to the Chinese Communists or to the Soviet Union was discussed. It was decided, however, that this would do little good and would be less effective than actions, and might be taken by the Chinese Communists as a desire to negotiate and therefore as a sign of weakness. It was agreed that the following actions should be taken in order to suggest to both the Communists and the Nationalists that the United States would intervene in the event of a major attack:

(a) To increase GRC and American military capabilities in the Taiwan Straits:

(1) One carrier should be added to the Seventh Fleet and three carriers should be kept in the Taiwan Straits.

(2) A Fleet exercise should be held, but not in the Straits.

(3) Admiral Smoot should make a trip to the Offshore Islands.

(4) The United States should increase its fighters on Taiwan.

(5) There should be an increase in the flow of supplies, and if possible, daylight supplies, to the Offshore Islands.

(6) There should be a loan of three U. S. LST's to the GRC and the shipping of Sidewinder missiles to the GRC.

(7) There should be an increase of shipment of weapons to the GRC, including recoilless rifles, and other infantry equipment for delivery to the Offshore Islands.

(8) There should be a U. S.-GRC joint air defense exercise.

(b) In response to a possible question at a press conference, Eisenhower should answer that it is doubtful that a Chinese Communist effort to capture the Offshore Islands could be a limited operation and that it would consistute a real threat to the peace. It was also noted that he might refer to the Dulles letter in the correspondence to be exchanged between Dulles and the Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Thomas Morgan. This letter was released on August 23. (c) Drumright was authorized to clarify with the GRC its retaliatory rights in light of the 1955 Dulles-Yeh exchange, and to tell Chiang that a heavy attack on the Offshore Islands would constitute an emergency in terms of the agreement and would justify retaliation, but that a minor attack on the Offshore Islands would not. Drumright was also instructed to inform the GRC that further measures were under review to strengthen the GRC military.[113]

Following the meeting, the exchange of letters between Dulles and Representative Morgan was arranged. In response to Morgan's letter, which had noted with concern the reports of a Chinese Communist build-up of air power opposite Taiwan and asked for Dulles' comments, Dulles wrote in a letter released on August 23:

> We are, indeed, disturbed by the evidence of Chinese Communist build-up, to which you refer. It suggests that they might be tempted to try to seize forcibly the Quemoy or Matsu Islands.
>
> As you know, these islands have been continuously in the hands of the Republic

> of China, and over the last four years the ties between these islands and Formosa have become closer and their interdependence has increased.
>
> I think it would be highly hazardous for anyone to assume that if the Chinese Communists were to attempt to change this situation by force and now to attack and seek to conquer these islands, that could be a limited operation. It would, I fear, constitute a threat to the peace of the area. Therefore, I hope and believe that it will not happen.*[114] [Italics added.]

In the letter to Morgan, Dulles had come very far towards satisfying the GRC request that he make a public statement that the United States would defend the Offshore Islands. The letter was as clear as the later Dulles statement after his conversation with Eisenhower at Newport on September 4. It went as far as Dulles could go, given his interpretation of the Congressional Resolution, and was agreed upon as soon as Dulles returned to Washington. The apparent refusal of the United States to issue such a warning had been part of the message to the Chinese Communists which had led them to believe that the United States might not defend Quemoy. It is impossible to say whether or not had the letter been published one or two days earlier it would have prevented the Chinese Communist attack. As a matter of fact, the artillery attack had been launched before the letter reached the Chinese Communist leadership.

---

*The New York Times interpreted the Dulles letter as a warning to the Chinese Communists not to seize Quemoy or Matsu. The same story reported a build-up of ground forces opposite Taiwan but it was reported that this build-up was not believed sufficient for an amphibious invasion of the Offshore Islands but rather was part of the forces which had been removed from North Korea. Hong Kong observers were reported to believe that the Dulles warning would help satisfy Taipei by making a definite commitment to defend the Offshore Islands.[115]

After the meeting, which lasted most of the afternoon, Dulles conferred with Robertson and Herter. Dulles and Herter then went to the White House and spent a half hour discussing the situation with the President. At six that evening, Dulles and Herter returned to State to continue planning with Robertson and with Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations William B. Macomber, Jr.[116]

On the 20th of August, the Navy, in a response to a memorandum from Marshall Green at State, reported that there appeared to be no pattern to the previous Chinese Communist shelling of the Offshore Islands. The Chinese Communists, according to the Navy, appeared to have the capability to crater the airfield on Quemoy and to destroy the port facilities, but they had not done so. There was no operations plan for the U. S. air defense of Taiwan, but such defense could be put into effect and, though it would help the GRC somewhat, it would not be decisive. In response to a question on the possibility of some kind of escort, the Navy noted that there was no such thing as a degree of escort and the United States would either have to escort completely or not at all. They provided an estimate to Green that the latest aircraft being supplied to the Chinese Nationalists were superior to the MIGs which the Chinese Communists had.[117]

THE EVE OF CRISIS

The Chinese Communists successfully occupied the airfields opposite Taiwan without the threatened bombing attempts by the Chinese Nationalists and succeeded in sharply reducing the ability of the Chinese Nationalists to engage in overflights over the Chinese mainland opposite Taiwan. They, then, were clearly ready to go a step further in their campaign of the use of military force to secure the political objective of overthrowing the Taiwan regime. Although they were no doubt aware of the build-up in American forces in the area and of aid to the Chinese Nationalists, the American build-up had not yet assumed major proportions, and its meaning within the context of a Chinese attempt to seize Quemoy remained ambiguous.

American and Chinese Nationalist caution in response to their activation of the airfields plus the refusal of the United States to state that it would defend Quemoy probably gave the Chinese Communists some confidence in the belief that the United States would not support a defense of Quemoy and perhaps might even force an evacuation of the Islands. The Chinese Communists were then ready for a move against the Offshore Islands, their ultimate objective being to secure the collapse of the Nationalist regime.

By August 23 the Chinese Nationalists had become convinced that a move against the Offshore Islands was in the making. For the Nationalists this could only be viewed as an opportunity to involve the United States in a major military action against the Chinese Communists, which was clearly their only hope for a return to the mainland. The Nationalists' maneuver to secure a U. S. backing for defense of Quemoy can be seen, as it probably was, as part of the effort to involve the United States in what was expected to be the oncoming military move against Quemoy or Matsu, or perhaps one of the smaller Offshore Islands. The Chinese Nationalists were probably not interested in deterring a Chinese Communist move by a U. S. declaration, but rather enhancing the probability of U. S. involvement by securing a public U. S. commitment prior to the outbreak of crisis. Though the Nationalists acted with restraint and caution prior to and throughout the crisis, they continued to drop hints that their patience might run out, that unless strong U. S. action were taken they might be forced to take unilateral action, and that they had every right to do so under the existing U. S.-Chinese Nationalist agreements.

Most American military and civilian officers in the Pacific area and in Washington were convinced that a crisis was about to break in the Taiwan Straits. They had been striving to get both a U. S. public statement which might head off a crisis and a firm U. S. decision on whether the Offshore Islands would in fact be defended. The general assumption was that the Islands would come under attack by an all-out air and sea interdiction campaign and that the United States would defend them with atomic attacks against the mainland. All of the policymaking echelons of the Government concerned seemed to be united in agreeing that Quemoy had to be defended. They were anxious not only to get a decision from Eisenhower and Dulles but also to make it clear to them that a firm decision had to include a willingness to use atomic weapons. Dulles had

Not - same
reasons as
Chinats?

made clear on August 22 that he would support a defense of the Offshore Islands and had arranged for the letter to Representative Morgan implying a U. S. commitment to defend Quemoy. Washington was now convinced that a crisis was imminent but still reacted with some surprise when the military phase began on the next day.